Punchlines

A Light Look At Politics '72

By Bob Orben

The Democratic Party is $9 million in debt; they took three weeks to find an acceptable candidate for Vice President; and they want us to let them run the country. That's like taking lessons in navigation from the captain of the *Titanic.*

Two fellas were sitting side by side and one heaved a long, mournful sigh. The other said, "I didn't know you were a Democrat."

Senator McGovern says he's going to change everything around. So did Hurricane Agnes.

My uncle is the only businessman I know who isn't afraid of McGovern's plan to cut 32 billion dollars from the defense budget. He makes white flags.

The nice part about McGovern's program is, you won't have to envy all the benefits the poor are getting. You'll be one of them.

If you don't think there's a use for recycled garbage, just look at the Democratic Platform.

They say that Senator McGovern has the cleanest mind in Washington. Why not? Look how often he changes it.

I'll never forget the first time I voted in a Presidential election. It was 1952 in Chicago. Come to think of it, I'll never forget the second, third, fourth and fifth times I voted in a Presidential election. It was 1952 in Chicago.

Cook County is where people vote like Clifford Irving writes.

I have no problems with voting this year. I just listened to what the Democrats had to say about each other – and took them at their word.

McGovern is doing wonders for my uncle on Wall Street. He rents out ledges.

(Copyright © 1972 by Bob Orben.)

TWO SONS of Franklin D. Roosevelt are among Nixon supporters of 1972. At left is John Roosevelt, a Republican, and at right is James Roosevelt, a Democrat. Between them with Mr. Nixon is John B. Connally, former Secretary of the Treasury who heads Democrats to Re-elect the President. They were pictured at a recent courtesy call in the White House.

NEW McGOVERNOMICS BRING IN TORRENT OF DEMOCRATIC SILENCE

Congressional Democrats are maintaining a thundering silence on Sen. George McGovern's tax reform-welfare proposals advanced recently in New York City.

Despite the fact that McGovern proclaimed this as a major policy address, replacing his $1,000-giveaway plan of primary days, only Chairman Wilbur Mills, of the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee, has made any comment so far as the record shows. Mills of course was named in the speech as McGovern's probable choice for Secretary of the Treasury in the improbable event of McGovern's election. But even Mills avoided committing himself either as to accepting the appointment or the new McGovern plan.

The silence is particularly remarkable in view of the fact that several of McGovern's proposals were lifted from Democratic bills which have been floating around Congress for some time.

But while the silence may be remarkable, it is not hard to explain.

Rep. Barber B. Conable, Jr., (R.,N.Y.), a member of the Ways and Means Committee, noting he has heard "not one word" from House Democrats in defense of McGovern's plan which would include closing of tax "loopholes" and a $4,000 minimum guaranteed income, commented:

"Congressional Democrats simply don't want to identify with George McGovern. After all, they're up for re-election."

Rep. Herman T. Schneebeli (R.,Pa.), also a committee member, agreed.

Meanwhile, Secretary Peter G. Peterson of the Department of Commerce disclosed that Mills himself is on record against at least one of McGovern's major proposals – repeal of the investment credit which encourages business to invest in job-creating plants and equipment.

Peterson recalled that, prior to the McGovern speech, Mills had described the investment credit as "a stimulus to the economy . . . that is economically healthy over the long run in holding down price increases and assuring that U.S. producers are more competitive in world markets."

POLITICAL POTPOURRI

Campaigning recently in Michigan, Sargent Shriver got all balled up on why Eagleton had left the ticket. First, he said it was because of Eagleton's history of mental depression, later he said it was not in the national interest to have someone on the ticket with such a "disability," then finally in a modification and retraction Shriver repudiated the other two statements and said he agreed with the McGovern reason for dumping the Missouri Democrat. Commented a reporter who had witnessed Shriver's meanderings: "Who does Sarge think he is flip-flopping around like that, George McGovern?"...The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reports that Eagleton campaigning in Missouri is carefully separating himself from some of McGovern's more far-out positions on some issues. The

Petersen

Putting the Clamp on Public TV

A statement issued last week by Clay T. Whitehead of the White House Office of Telecommunications, bodes ill for the immediate future of public television's news and public affairs programming.

The statement questions the right of public television to broadcast public affairs programming.

The White House does not directly control public television, nor does the Congress, but the politicians hold the purse strings, and all efforts to establish government funding independent of government control have thus far been thwarted by fears among politicians that an independent public television might interfere with their own reelection plans.

Sander Vanocur

The White House is known to be unhappy with the appointment of Sander Vanocur as a public television correspondent assigned to cover the 1972 election, and some observers see in the Whitehead statement an indication that the White House is attempting to gag public television until November.

The Whitehead statement:

"There is a real question as to whether public television, particularly the national federally funded part of public television, should be carrying public affairs, news commentary, and that kind of thing, for several reasons," the statement said.

"One [reason] is the fact that the commercial networks, by and large, do quite a good job in that area. Public television is designed to be an alternative to provide programming that isn't available on commercial television; so you could raise the legitimate question as to should there be as much public affairs, as much news commentary, as they apparently plan to do. . . .

". . . When you're talking about using federal funds to support a journalism activity, it's always going to be the subject of scrutiny. The Congress will always be watching closely. The press will be watching it closely. It just invites a lot of political attention."

This extraordinary call for a public television system that eschews public affairs programming may, of course, be a trial balloon. The ideas it contains are carefully phrased as questions.

But the implications are ominous, and the public ought to shoot the balloon right out of the sky—unless, of course, the public wants public TV to revert to its former status as a rather stuffy educational and cultural medium that spends most of its time in deadly review of the past for an audience so small as to be almost nonexistent.

Public television is indeed designed to provide an "alternative service" to commercial broadcasting, but the proper alternative is more news and public affairs, not less.

Altho it is refreshing—indeed startling—for anyone in the White House to say that the commercial networks "do quite a good job" in pubic affairs, news commentary, "and that kind of thing," the fact is that the commercial networks do not do nearly enough.

Partly as the result of other government meddling—in the form of the misbegotten prime-time access rule—news and public affairs programming in the prime evening time, when most citizens are able to watch, has been sharply reduced this season.

The networks will, of course, cover the primaries, the conventions, and the post-convention campaign and election, and there will be times when we'll be tired of hearing about politics because there will be so much of it.

But much of it will be repetitious and dull—full of endless speeches that will add such phrases to the household comic vocabulary as "I want to make one thing perfectly clear" and "Let me say this about that."

Already this year we are confronted with Sen. Muskie's "New Beginning," a slogan that became tedious upon first repetition.

The network newsmen do as good a job as they can, I suppose, but they are limited by time and by the necessity just to cover the events, the surface, of the campaign.

Any commercial network campaign coverage that goes much deeper will be limited to occasional documentaries and to brief commentaries in the regular newscasts.

Public television, if properly financed and left alone, could and should start to cover government and politics in more depth and detail. The Whitehead statement makes abundantly clear that better coverage is the last thing the White House wants.

Clarence Petersen